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ABSTRACT

This book takes a look at what U.S. high school seniors know about government and politics and how they learn about it. Secondary school civics courses enhance students' civic knowledge. The book is based on the 1988 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the most extensive assessment to date of civic knowledge among youth. The depth of students' knowledge on a wide range of political and civic topics is documented. Differences in civic knowledge are demonstrated among students grouped according to race, gender, type of school, amount of instruction, and other characteristics of individuals, schools, and homes. A theoretical model to explain the cognitive process by which students learn about politics is developed and tested and then discussed. Specific changes in the style and emphasis of civics teaching are suggested. Chapter titles include: (1) "Civic Education and Students' Knowledge"; (2) "What High School Students Know (and Don't Know) about Civics"; (3) "How Students Learn about Government: The Exposure-Selection Model"; (4) "Exposure to Learning: Civic Instruction"; (5) " Selection and Retention"; (6) What Makes Students Learn" and (7) "The Future of Civic Education." Contains chapter notes and extensive references. (BT)

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